(d) Government has been taking continuous measures for increasing quota utilization, which include release of additional quantities under the First Come First Serve (FCFS)/Ready Goods Entitlement (RGE) systems; recycling of unutilized and surrendered quantities under the FCFS/RGE pool; invocation of normal and exceptional flexibilities, simplifying and rationalizing procedures regarding Earnest Money Deposit (EMD), transferability and validity of quotas etc. Besides, the Textile Export Promotion Councils have been undertaking regular export promotion measures to step up exports of textile and clothing items, including quota items to quota countries.

Functioning of testing laboratories under CSB in Karnataka

1602. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) how many testing laboratories under Central Silk Board are functioning in Karnataka;

(b) whether there is any proposal to set up more testing laboratories to avoid delays in the mandatory testing of silk imported from China; and

(c) if so, how many new testing laboratories proposed to be set up in Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) to (c) Two testing laboratories are functioning under the Central Silk Technological Research Institute (CSTRI) of Central Silk Board in Karnataka. As the raw silk testing facilities available in these laboratories are considered adequate to handle testing of imported silk, at present there is no proposal to set up more testing laboratories.

New scheme for textile workers

1603. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to introduce a new scheme aimed at development and welfare of the textile sector workers and augmenting the employment opportunities in the sector;

(b) if so, what are the details with allocations made for implementation of the scheme; and

(c) whether people engaged in silk industry will received special focus under the scheme as they are suffering maximum on account of the Chinese silk adversely affecting the Indian silk market?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) to (c) In addition to the existing schemes, the Government does not have any specific proposal for introducing any new scheme aimed at development and welfare of the workers. To augment the employment opportunities by increasing investment and modernisation, the following important decisions have been taken:

* In the Union Budget 2004-05;

  - Except for mandatory excise duty on polyester filament yarn including texturised yarn, synthetic and artificial fibres and synthetic and artificial filament yarns, the whole value addition chain has been given excise exemption option.

  - Additional Excise Duty on Textiles & Textile Articles (AT&T) and Additional Excise Duty (Goods of Special Importance) Act have been abolished.

  - Basic customs duty on various textile machinery and spare parts has been reduced to 5%.

* The Government has launched a Centrally sponsored scheme titled "Apparel Park for Export Scheme" for imparting focused thrust for setting up of apparel manufacturing units of international standards at potential growth centres and to give fillip to exports.

- For upgrading infrastructure facilities at important textile centers, a scheme "Textile Centre Infrastructure Development Scheme" (TCIDS) has oeen launched.

  The Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) has been made operational from 01.04.1999 to facilitate the modernisation and upgradation of the sector.

- Weaving, processing and garment machinery, which are covered

under TUFS, have been extended the facility of accelerated depreciation at the rate of 50%. Cost of machinery has also been reduced through Fiscal Policy measures.

In order to explore the potential for further increasing the exports of textiles a series of specialised market studies have been commissioned through professional firms. These studies will enable identification of business opportunities for the exporters especially in the post quota regime.

Welfare of weavers

†1604. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of various schemes of Government for weavers; and

(b) the steps taken for welfare of weavers?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) and (b) The Government of India is implementing the various schemes for welfare of handioom weavers in the country. The details of these schemes are as under:

(i) **Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana**

The scheme envisages product development, infrastructural support, institutional support, training to the weavers, supply of equipments and marketing support etc. both at macro and micro levels in an integrated and co-ordinated manner for the overall development of the handioom sector and the weavers.

(ii) **Mill Gate Price Scheme**

Government of India is implementing the Mill Gate Price Scheme under which the National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC), is arranging supply of all types of yarn required for the handioom weavers and their organizations at Mill Gate Price. The expenditure for transportation of yarn from the Mill Gate to the godown of the handloom agencies is being reimbursed by Government of India to NHDC.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.